

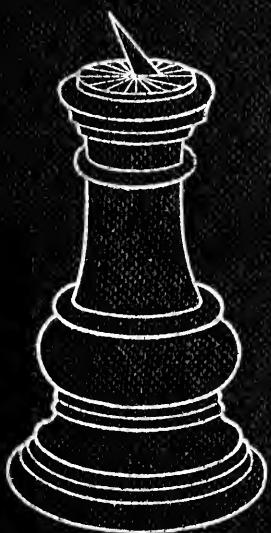
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OUT OF HOURS

J. M. STUART-YOUNG



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OUT OF HOURS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

VERSE :

THE SEDUCTIVE COAST
MINOR MELODIES
THE AFTER LIFE
THE ANTINOMIAN

PROSE :

PASSION'S PERIL
MERELY A NEGRESS
THE SOUL SLAYER
A CUPFUL OF KERNELS
THE DOOR OF DARKNESS

OUT OF HOURS

POEMS LYRICS AND SONNETS



BY

J. M. STUART-YOUNG

88

LONDON
ARTHUR STOCKWELL, 29, LUDGATE HILL
1909

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DEDICATORY APOLOGY

My dear John Davidson,

I know of little that need be said in the way of apology for this book, of nothing indeed that can be said without an appearance of egotism. But you, dear friend, have read about one-half of the poems in manuscript; and your criticisms call for a meed of self-defence. I do not desire that the readers of "Out of Hours" should look upon me, after the book has been laid aside, as a deliberate and calculating worker in sensual word-mosaic. For, while the abnormality of my delight in Youth and Beauty is apparent to me (and has been so for many years) I have striven throughout these expressions of feeling to write with spontaneity and freedom.

I recall the conversation, three months before I left for the Tropics in 1908, which you accorded me at St. Ives. My admiration of you, as a writer of fantastic prose and haunting poetry, informed the whole of our intercourse—and you were generous enough to convey to me some degree of intelligence regarding the impulsive way in which you perform the greater part of your work. But you added slyly: "The true artist is sure carefully to revise his lines at leisure. For both sonnets and lyrics may be inspired—but they are best when they are guarded and polished, guarded and polished!"

I take it, then, on your authority, that a Sonnet is the least likely of all forms of poetic expression to be made "stiff" by revision and improvement. Even so, in the present case, I have not sought Perfection—impossible Ideal to even the greatest creator of thought! For, while I have invested my rhymes with all the grace available, I have also sought to study my fancies in a purely impersonal way, leaving them practically untouched after each emotion has reached its reasonable and comprehensive expression.

As you know, these poems were written under somewhat peculiar conditions, and in the Bush of West Africa. Nothing, I conceive, can be less suggestive of the pure ecstasy of a Spring Day in England than the depressing heat of a dense tropical

forest. On the other hand, the "Birth-Land of Night" (as some one of our West African writers has not inaptly called the Bush) lends the abstraction from worldly news, without which—shall we not assume?—the greater portion of our lyric lore would not exist.

Here, some reader will exclaim, maybe, is clearly a case of verse being written falsely; as no emotion can be true unless it belongs to the moment and the place, and is caught up instantly. The leaping shadows on the wall are not the fire, nor is the crested wave a genuine indication of the tide.

This standpoint, however, appears to me to be a fallacious one.

My fancies have been written down in widely different moods, and under varying circumstances, during the six months that I was cut off from all "white" conversation, in the despatch of logs from the Forest to the Coast. Only the arrival of mails, sometimes twice, occasionally only once, each month, served to break the monotony of rising, eating, working, and sleeping. Each one, of course, has had its root in actual experience or imagined adventure. The mind of yester-year, as it were, has acted as receiver—the thoughts being written thereon in sympathetic ink. Loneliness, suffering, relief, hunger, hope, terror, regret—each sensation has brought to the surface (EVOKE^D by the perusal of a letter from one dearly loved) an emotional record already impressed upon the brain.

Oftener than not the only materials for literary work, which were at my command, consisted of a pencil and the margin of a newspaper. Composed during the leisure of an evening, after the "boys" had been given their rations of rice and dried fish—each line reproduced from the dusty archives of some previous opal-coloured year—the completed poems were immediately placed in an envelope, and despatched to you, there to be retained until I should ask you for the return of the manuscript.

The copying out of the lines this month has been the mechanical occupation of an amanuensis, and (as previously stated) I have refrained from making alterations save where your own occasional emendations have impressed me as just.

Somewhere, in a more ambitious volume of mine, written in days when I was seriously courting the muse, I have written, "Beauty is the expression of individuality. Poetry is the flowering of the mind into rhythmic utterance, Prose the budding of the leaves. And, seeing how deeply an erotic spirit flavours natural

life, it is no wonder that the sweetest singers in any tongue are immeasurably sensuous."

The craftsman is always the craftsman, I suppose, possessing a faculty of self-criticism which is co-equal with that of the professional reviewer. Faults here are numerous, blemishes must be evident, ineptitudes frequent—to be quite frank, I am ashamed of my work . . . or, should I not condone that, and say of SOME of my work? The unhealthy ring of certain lines is obvious to me; the frenzy of others; the fatuity of others; but (Dieu merci!) the merit of others! I conclude that I always meant to publish the volume, though when I was working upon its contents, the occupation served merely as a palliative of my weariness, and an anodyne of my absolute loneliness of spirit.

Hence, I make no special appeal to the reader who has sympathy with my outlook. Having seen—comme vous, mon cher ami—my Ideal in flashes, at first with a mazed and faltering vision, but ever more clearly as my eyes have been purged by manhood and the variable experience, bitter and sweet, of the passing years, I do not hesitate to expect understanding and sympathy, even from the most pronounced of Philistines!

All expressions and experiences have their value, sensations their psychological significance. The only road along which we can travel to a true philosophy of life seems to me to lie in this humble study of one's own nature—capturing the diverse readings of the soul's phenomena, as they are forced upon the mind by that essence of the soul—memory!

Your own words are apropos—

“ My feet are heavy now, but on I go,
My head erect beneath the tragic years;
The way is steep, but I would have it so,
And dusty, but I lay the dust with tears,
Though none may see me weep: alone I climb
The rocky path that leads me out of time—
Out of time and out of all,
Singing yet in sun and rain
‘ Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again.’

Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair
That went before me still and made the pace,

*The earth is full of graves, and mine was there
Before my life began, my resting-place;
And I shall find it out, and with the dead
Lie down for ever, all my sayings said,
Deeds all done, songs all sung,
While others chant in sun and rain,
'Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again.'*"

This is truth—or the truth so far as any man can write it about himself, or about the race to which he belongs!

Many of your keenest admirers were displeased by the result of such extreme candour. Personally, I revere your books the more—and it is in the same spirit that I would have my own poor verses received.

I shall protest no further. To you it is unnecessary—and as for the General Public . . . Well, no one is asked to buy my book, so that I must beg leave to be excused!

Better fortune, dear J. D., and that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding."

Your devoted

West Africa,

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Spring, 1909.

NOTE.—Since I wrote the Dedicatory letter quoted above, the mysterious disappearance and death of John Davidson has added yet another tragedy to the long list of Disappointed Genius. I am reluctant to withdraw any part of my apology; nor do I care to add anything to what I have already written. Perhaps a significant sentence from my letter to "The Saturday Review," May 29th, 1909, would not be superfluous.

I quote verbatim: ". . . the painfully obvious and oft-stated fact that at no time during the last half-century (to go no further back) has any man had a right to expect a living out of poetry."

It behoves all lovers of true verse to awaken to a sense of their responsibilities! In the hands of book-buyers—and book-buyers only—lies the remedy of John Davidson's despairing suicide.

Autumn, 1909.

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The Offering

TAKE, sweetest heart, the homage that I bring,
For—be it young or old—
Each soaring note that I may chance to sing
To you has first been told :

Told to you, dearest, whispered in your ear;
And when life's shadows fall,
I hope these halting melodies to hear
In silence—best speech of all!

The Heather Bell

IN shawls of carnation and kirtles of green
Blossoms and buds shine out from the trees;
They linger in hedges, or languish unseen
In dim tender corners, rock'd by the breeze :
Crowding the dale in a purple demean,
Seducing the sun and enticing the bees!

Richest and sweetest the dear heather-bell
Nestles so near to where hasty feet chafe :
A talisman wrought with a fairy spell,—
Miraculous, mystical, delicate waif;
Clutching the breast of the sheltering dell,
Rocked by the breeze, and perfectly safe!

The Lady

I.

I saw one day in summer
A flow'ret pure and fair;
Ah! why when I stooped o'er it
Did sorrow hold me there?

Was it too pure for wonder,
Too good for human eyes?
Or did some subtle answer
Leap out to my surmise?

There was no stain upon it,
And that thought wounded me;
Ah! little flower-lady,
I dare not worship thee!

II.

Sometimes I sit beside her,
My raptured heart beats fast;
I say, "Ah! she is near me,
My own, my own, at last!"

Oft-times I dare not see her,
Her presence is too dear;
I linger sad and lonely,
And shed a silent tear.

III.

“ A Rose to you I give,”
The smiling lover said,
“ For, dear, the life you live
Is full of roses red!”

She took the blushing rose,
Nor dream’d of hidden thorn—
The treacherous spike that grows
Beneath. Her hands were torn.

But on her breast she laid
The blossom, blushing red;
I marked it hourly fade
Though by her heart’s blood fed.

IV.

I brought a lily pure,
When Passion’s flower was dead;
“ I bring to you the cure
Of love and pain,” I said.

“ Place this against your breast,
’Twill heal its smart and ache,
Till night shall bring you rest,
And morrow’s dawn shall break.”

She took it. All her guile
(Ah! Death is strong and deep!)
Was fled. I saw her smile,
My darling fell asleep.

V.

The stars shone faint in the windy night,
The moon was low on the hill,
When my dead love came with a wondrous light,
Loving and beautiful still.

“ Oh! come with me to my misty home,
The land where the angels are :
And I will lead thee to God! Oh, come!
I will guide thee from star to star! ”

But we went to sleep for a thousand moons,
Under the dew and the rain;
And she has forgotten her home, eftsoons,
And I have forgotten my pain!

VI.

King Death seemed loath to wake us;
For there, in the soundless deep,
When home He came to take us,
He found us clasped in sleep.

So mayhap in our dreaming
On risks and perils run,
We shall arouse, past Seeming,
To find Life's Haven won !

On the Street

HERE on the streets? Good God! what's this?

I danced at her bridal a year ago!

(Your husband was harsh and you tired of bliss,
And life is a gamble, an empty show?)

The same bright face, but rouge on her cheeks,—

She fingers her rings and laughs the while;

The same sweet voice of violets speaks,

But jars a little with slang and guile.

(A year ago you were boasted of all,

I drink with you here as a “ friend ” to-night :)

As honour'd guest I danced at her ball,

And she has gone down! What a sorry plight!

Fragile and pure, creamy white and rose,—

(There's lodgings to pay and a girl must live?

There's bangles and theatres, money and those

Trifles that lovers were once wont to give?)

But to-morrow? (What matter? It's all in your right?)

She says it with laughter and tears in her eyes;

'Tis perfum'd day and a doubtful night—

And an earthly Hell and a Paradise!

A Fragment

EVEN when the day is drear and nights are long,
Through the sadness and the sore,
A song
Ripples o'er.

Even in the deepest sorrow I can feel
In my soul a breaking smile :
A seal
To reconcile.

Or when fleet joy illumines o'er the way
Of life, I shed a tear,—
The day
Is one of fear.

Fragile we are; emotions melt as snow
Before the fire's bright gleam;
And lo!
All is a dream!

A Dead Poet

O thou! serenely dead, amid the throng
Of tuneless poets in a sordid town,
Each wild and wistful harbinger of song
Was near thee smiling when thy thoughts were sown.

Thy songs were sweet: thy lays were ever glad,
In thy fresh lines were bird and bud and tree;
And when thou sang'dst of sorrow we were sad,
For fiction did not thrall,—'twas real to thee!

Among the reeds intimately lied'st thou,
Anear the roots of radiant flowers that thrust
Aloft their heads. And thou upon the bough
Wert sure of home, and feared'st not distrust.

The silent labour of the patient rain
Was to thy tuneful measure reconciled;
The little life of Autumn's pregnant grain
Was incarnate within thy sonnet mild.

Nature is sister to thee now, and tells
Thee all her secrets, all her sorrow's burden;
The lily budding from thy breast compels
The benediction of our freer pardon.

I look at life with clearer, calmer eyes,
No place there is that does not breathe thy name;
Some gracious word of thine opes Paradise
And fills the mind with iridescent flame.

Sebastian, take my little halting song,—
Thou wert my friend, and all my passion now
Is mingled with the listless passing throng;
And mingled with my life and death art thou!

Melancholia

THE world is dead and cold,
And only tremors flit
Across my soul. 'Tis writ
In some book, turgid, old,
That man is but a shadow
Within a world of dreams.

I lie on my lonely bed,
And look at the soulless stars;
The rain is dripping like lead,
And nothing my pain unbars,—
Man and shadow . . . !

Restless and sleepless am I,
And fear is gnawing my heart;
I gaze on the leaden sky—
But nothing will heal the smart;
World and dream . . . !

Here, from the murky street,
'Neath moon, pallid and thin,
The beat of monotonous feet
Comes welling and surging in—

Man and shadow and dream,
World and dream and shadow!

The day has been one of rain,
All night the roofs have drip'd,
All day has my solace been pain,
All night shall my soul be whip'd,—
Man and dream and shadow,
World and shadow and dream!

I am weary of tears, all tears,
I pine for my heart's desire,
A runner lost 'mid the spears
Of pursuers, and windy fire—
Man and shadow and dream,
World and dream and shadow!

I would wash in the cleansing flood,
Runs to th' eternal sea;
I long for green solitude,
For birds in a sighing tree,—
World and dream and shadow,
Man and shadow and dream!

Glimpses

I.

A MINION, rosy, young and frankly fair,
Upon his golden curls a diadem,
Beneath his ivory neck a glittering gem,
And in his heavy eyes Lust and Despair.

II.

The sun encouch'd upon a bed of blood,
Filling the path with shadows long and weird;
And through the trees a-tiltœ then there near'd
One with shamed face, who beckon'd to the wood.

III.

A girl with parted lips and trembling hands,
“ Virtuous you are, a frail embodied joy! ”
A man with head averted near her stands,—
“ And I could love you: if you were a boy! ”

IV.

A youth with loitering limbs, importunate lips,
And flowers before him, lifted by his breath;
Then a brown worm that on the dank soil slips,
And I, wild-eyed beside him, whispering “ Death! ”

V.

A drunken girl with rough dishevell'd hair,
Reeling a-down the street at break o' day;
And at the corner, with a soulless stare,
The speckless man who speeds her on her way!

Ada

In our little murky street,
When rain fell fast,
And the sound of slushy feet
Meander'd past;
Ada sat and smiled and croon'd
All the day;
Murk and mire assuaged her wound—
She felt gay!

Should we laugh and cry aloud,—
Keeping holiday;
Should we bend o'er infant, proud,
On its natal day,
Showing keen delight,—a tear
In Ada's eye
Would glisten, and in awful fear
She would sigh!

Ada cried when we had mirth,
She was crazed;
Sin had vaunted at her birth,
She was mazed.
Ah! But method rules the hour :
Should we laugh—or cry?
Life is full of secret power,
Let us sigh!

TRANSFIGURATION

WITHIN the bosom of the poet prest,
Dry scentless leaves find shelter and a rest;
But as the warm blood through his body flows,
They rise and blossom in a new-born rose.

Epigrams

CYNICISM

FROM Helicon's stream a draught would once inspire
 The bard to sing in sweet ecstatic flight;
But poets of this sordid age require
 A draft on Parr's, made "payable at sight."

IN TUNE

As a bell in a chime
 Sets its relative ringing,
So one poet's rhyme
 Wakes his comrade to singing.

SONNET GLOSE

TEXT

ROSSETTI'S "THE DARK GLASS"

I dedicate these sonnets to you, “ my
Tommy,” and apologise for their
crudities.

The Dark Glass

(*House of Life*—xxxiv.)

Not I myself know all my love for thee :
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday ?
Shall birth, and death, and all dark names that be
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;
And shall my Soul pierce love,—the last relay
And ultimate outpost of Eternity ?

Lo ! What am I to Love, the Lord of all ?
One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand,—
One little heart flame sheltered in his hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call,
And veriest touch of powers primordial
That any hour-girt life may understand.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

I.

He lies, a drowsy sensualist content :
 His flushed face copied by the ripening corn.
 I worship at his side, the while is born
Within my nature jealousy unspent.
He is as one who to the earth was sent
 To feed on luscious lotus leaves, unworn
 By contact with mankind; and hearts forlorn
Make sweet with whole of beauty's blandishment.

Muse on, my Prince, and fancy life a psalm
 Set to the melody of earth and sea;
 I must not woo thee now; 'twixt thee and me
Is noontide's barrier. . . When each evening's calm
Brings thy fair head upon my willing arm
 Not I myself know all my love for thee!

II.

Summer has slowly burned these silent lands,
 Leaving them golden, tinged with ruddy fire;
 Yet in the hedge-top mark reluctant briar,
Rose of July, extending snowy hands;
While kingcups clasp the sward in starry bands,
 And everywhere day whispers its desire
 For cradled sleep. E'en vocal bees aspire
To naught save rest, despite the dew's demands.

And thou art like a god within the woods,
Chequered with woven sunbeams. (Here Pan lay
At anguished solstice, conquered by the sway
Of boyish tiredness.) Upland solitudes
Make holy all our erewhile wanton moods . . .
How should I reach so far who cannot weigh?

III.

My Princeling lies beside the watery gleam
Of little pool,—its ever-trembling glass
Faint circling to the breezes as they pass.
His rosy cheeks reflect each brilliant beam
Of sunlight; and the sight gives pulsing dream
To my ambitions. In the long lush grass
How sweet to lie beside him, and amass
Our lyric lore to Nature's endless theme!

I kneel beside him, conning every line:
I am so wont to watch at break o' day;
And when my shaded tributes most I pay
His eyes are closed. . . This hush-song makes me pine
For dusk to come, that I may not decline
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday.

IV.

I am as one who leaves the sunlit height
To seek the valley, while the solemn sky
Cools into ashy wanness. Strange that I,
Who love the sun so well, should count the light

Impediment and barrier to the sight
Of this fair bud, which blossoms cannot vie!
Sweetest one, slumber!—for thy friend is nigh
Though voiceless and inactive in his might.

The daisies make an aureole for thy head;
Incarnadined art thou with purity:
The consummation and the mystery
Art not for now. The passionate hour is red,
And heaven forbids my love! Shall Love be dead?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be?

V.

And yet . . . how sweet is this enchanted place!
'Tis not for flowers that I am mostly fain:
The day's effulgence serves to waken pain;
And all the rapture of thy angel-face,
Its youth, its indolence and native grace,
Place round my arms and feet a brutal chain
That cold, hard men, out-topping sense, have ta'en
As check for lover in love's secret place.

Oft have I marked thee on thy pillow white,
With parted lips, expectant, eager, free
For Eros and his crownèd majesty.
And then, ah! then, all doubt has taken flight:
Our pulses have been in their matchless night,
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea.

VI.

All mental pains the mortal soul endures;
And thus it is that fibres leap anew :
I must, I *must* absorb myself in you,—
Must take the joy this solitude secures.
Could but the rapture that the thought procures
Be lifted to completion, Will to Do
Would bring a peril passionate; for few
There are who know the thrill such love ensures!

The fault lies in this fervent atmosphere :
Self-schooled, self-scarred, I am too fierce for day !
Night is my anodyne,—as seas may play
Silkiply silent when the moon shines clear,
But in the day of storm bring clamorous fear,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray!

VII.

Sleep on a while, heart's dearest, while I roam
Through these fair fields to seek a lighter mind.
What joy is there for me in wanton wind?
Now I behold that love must have its home,
Its beamy roof and starry-tesselled dome.
Pleasure and purpose both have left my mind,
And thy serene unconsciousness makes blind
My amorous instincts, like some heavy tome.

When thy faint-fluttering footsteps wake the field,
And thy dear voice exults in laughter gay,
Lo! suddenly the orient light will play
Around once more; and ripened sheaves will yield
Anew their secret. Then shall my heart be filled,
And shall my soul pierce love, the last relay!

VIII.

So may thy holy dreams touch nearer earth
Than is their wont. I know love's topmost peak
Is not for me; for I have grown too weak
To climb the slopes. Still have I wakened birth
Of passion in thy nature, seen the mirth
Grow hourly stronger. There's no more to seek
Than this—that thou and I should learn to eke
Our wonder and our wealth 'gainst future dearth.

When thou shalt wake I will with thee inhale
A rarefied delight and ecstasy.
“ To-night, to-night! ” my heart will hauntingly
Be crying to my brain. Life's breath may fail
In level air; but moonrise brings the vale
And ultimate outpost of eternity!

IX.

For verily our love has reached its flower,
And redly fall the petals, one by one;
Soon, soon, beneath an urgent autumn sun
The fruit will shine, and harvest be our dower.
The leaves crisp now; but doubt we not the power
Of life resurgent in the seed, when dun
And dark are winter's skies. The seasons run
From plighted troth to bridal's pensive bower.

It seems but yesterday our plot was proud
With woodbine and clematis, and the tall
Solemn lent-lilies,—till we heard the call
Of cuckoo in the clearing. . . . Soon a shroud
Of snow will all these haughty heads have bowed :
Lo! what am I to Love, the Lord of all?

X.

Love's height, they say, comes easy to the feet
Of him who feels the day-warmth in the air;
But there are friends who count the moonlight fair,—
And risk no rival in the night's slow beat.
I stand as one who thinks the sunbeam cheat,
And deems the heart its love-feast can prepare
Best in a chambered close, above a stair—
Ladder as symbol of ascension sweet!

Then silence is a sense from which one sips
 Water pellucid found in arid land :
The dawn steals in to find one on the strand,
Watching the distant tide as back it slips,
But holds as souvenir to his trembling lips
 One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand.

XI.

Belovèd, I have always held it true
 That swiftly and serenely life should run
 Toward its goal. This over-ardent sun
Gives eddying course too urgent. Though I woo
In earnest I'll not kiss, lest lust anew
 Should hurl me forth, ere rapture be begun.
Thou hast thy varied dreams : I know they shun
All painful issues. *I have my dreams too!*

This is a golden pause for me and thee.
 Soon wilt thou give thy sleepy quaint command :
 “ Help me to rise ! ” and dance the meadow-land
With ardour made rejuvenate, and see
King Sol at set, malicious, full of glee
 One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.

XII.

Hush ! . . . Softly wake ! . . . Sincerest constancy
 Comes to the surface in my lack of love.
The day must gloom before we homeward move,
And life is as a river, neither free

To pause or hurry on tempestuously. . .
Waken then sweetheart, my soul's treasure-trove;
The smiling clouds thy innocence prove,
And we may watch love's dawning consciously.

Once more we range the meadows side by side,
And deem the earth a flower-enamelled ball;
The moon is rising, and the loud rooks yowl;
Their piercing message may not be decried.
Prince o' my realm, Eros has been denied,
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call.

XIII.

Erewhile I have complained against the fate
Of life eternal; and the thought of death
Has 'suaded me to abdicate my breath.
Under spring skies I have not sought a mate,
Clinging to such dark things as fear and hate,
And blinding sight with tears! But now my faith
Is linked to harmony, and my Soul sayeth
That love is life, and life is happy state.

Look in mine eyes, and drink their message deep.
What do they say? Wilt thou obey the call?
My flesh is all athirst, and shadows fall
Deeper around us. Soon must love and sleep
Into our moonlit room on tiptoe creep,
And veriest touch of powers primordial.

XIV.

How sweet the sunrise on our little bed;
And tender is the fragrant morning breeze :
It dissipates all sense of foul disease
And pierces to my fibres. . . . Hours have fled
Like moments honey-filled. . . . Each word was said
In lessening cadence, while the solemn trees
Echoed our intent. . . . I am one who sees
The dawn break whitely, without fear or dread.

Slumber still claims him! Ah! delightful years
That linger in youth's listless wondering land!
His lips to mine, we knew a heavenly strand. . . .
How well I now recall his trembling fears
When all my manhood melted into tears.
THAT *any hour-girt life may understand!*

OUT OF HOURS

Dedicated to
JOHN GAMBRIL NICHOLSON
for some
most charming letters
and many sweet confidences

Doubts

THE man who taught me loving
Was clever, witty, keen;
But was it worth the proving :
For I have often seen
The may-flower wither on youth's holiday,
The lilac droop, or lily fade away—
And was love worth the proving?

Was love worth the learning—
That love he sang so well?
I saw Francesca yearning
Beneath Paola's spell;
But ardent night was followed by a dawn
Of shifting shame: mist-clouded was the morn—
So was love worth the learning?

Was love worth the proving?
It seemed to scorch my heart;
And all the fruit of loving
Was sorrow's greater part!
I walked alone because I lived awry,
And people murmured: "He dreams painfully"—
So was love worth the proving?

Is love now worth the learning?

 My Prince clasps both my hands;
 I feel my senses burning,
 For he—he understands!

Though death soon come, and years hold pain in store,
I feel that doubt shall be my part no more—
 And love is worth the learning!

Round the Clock

I SANG of my love in the sunshine of May,
And the garrulous bird on the sycamore spray
 Warbled his song to the nest;
Come, sweetheart, the flowers are a-bloom on the lea,
The blossoms are blooming on bramble and tree,
And all through the long, odorous Spring we will be
 At rest!

I sang of my love in the scorching July,
And the ruddy-browed sun in a radiant sky
 Uplifted his golden-hued crest;
For the clam'rous-tongued land was melodious with song—
Ah! the world shall be merry, the morns shall be long,
For love i' the sunshine is happy and strong,
 With rest!

I sang of my love in the wane of the year,
And the sheen of the sunset hung luridly drear
 Far down in the lowering west;
The home was forsaken—each throstle had fled,
All music seemed hushed : every flow'ret lay dead ;
But a voice through the silence and solitude said,
 “ Lo—Rest ! ”

Still warbles my heart in the wind o'er the snow;
There is rest after sorrow, and joy after woe,
 For love that is tried is the best;
I care not though tempest be black in the sky,
Though the sun may be fickle, and frail blossoms die,
A day surely comes when love's glamour is nigh,
 And rest, sweet rest!

Flowers of the Garden

His soul is like a garden, fair and sweet,
Where grow great blooms of red and blue and white;
And, through this realm I tread on daring feet,—
No pathway being too narrow for my might!

The way I use each morn is fair, and dim
With lovely beds of pensive violet—
It marks the portal of the soul of him
On whom my every pride and hope is set!

And back of this a vibrant hedge is high—
A hedge of lilies, passionless and white,—
These are his pure unsullied youth, and I
Am faint with worship at the holy sight.

But wealth is still behind them : for I see,
Clustered in circles, roses full of fire—
They are the symbols of our ecstasy,
And make me bold in anguish of desire.

So, half in yearning, half in prayer, I tread
The garden paths, till doubt is left behind :
On from the lily-gates where peace is fed
To the red glory of his passionate mind!

Promises

No classical tongues shall be yours, dear,
Because they are musty and cold—
See, laughing up there is the sun, dear,
And round us an earth never old!

All Nature is dancing to Springtime,
And winter is cruel no more:
A new world is made for the ringtime,
As tender as that known of yore.

So why should you delve in the past, love?
For surely 'tis frowsy; and flings
Only boulders before you, to cast, love,
Sad shadows on youth's fairest things.

Drink deep from an ever-clear nature:
White noon and a mystical eve;
For youth is the time for enjoyment,
And Age may not dead years retrieve!

Come then to the fields of white heather:
Dream there ivory dreams all the day;
And learn from the birds in Spring weather
The tune all Creation may play.

If Dreams Came True

If dreams came true, I would not mind
How drearily the breezes blew,
Nor that the Fates were all unkind—
If dreams came true!

I think of rapture and of you,
Of frail desire and plastic mind,
While tears blot all things from my view.

My hectic hopes illusion find,
And sorrow stabs my memory through;
But I should whistle with the wind
If dreams came true!

Clair de Lune

Oh, beautiful Moon with your Acolyte,
The steadfast Star or the ravelled Fleece,
When you see me sin in the secret night
Do you deem me callous?
Or is your Peace
Unbroken by usage of Man below?
Oh, beautiful Moon, is it so—
Yes or No!

You are white in summer and in winter gray :
But there's never a sky where you fear to reign;
As the Glory of Sunset passes away
The charm of your presence bepaints it again!
Oh, beautiful Moon, with the Brows of Snow,
It is so, as you know!

Two Souls may be bound by warm links into One—
So my constant Change and my haunting Quest
Speak only of Sympathies Life has undone :
Of a Broken Hope, and a Fierce Unrest!
Oh, beautiful Moon, with the Heart of Snow,
Life is so, as you know!

My Body shall rest in great Peace at last,
Under the ground, a forgotten thing :
All Pleasure shall die, and all Rapture be past,
And never a Blossom its Blessing shall bring !
Oh, beautiful Moon, with the Soul of Snow,
You surely know, you surely know !

Eternity and Life

I.

WITH searching eyes we scan the blue expanse,
We hear the rustling of the midnight air;
We look around, our senses in a trance,
But what we seek we see not anywhere.

II.

With madder motion and infuriate cry, the dancers on are
hurled,
We start and tremble at the ominous touch of Death;
With muffled groan we rise, seize on our cloaks, and from
the seething world
Are hurried—but the dancers pause not e'en for breath!

Icora's Song of the Aftermath

THE child is mine, and from my flesh he came;
Blood of my blood is he, flame of my flame;
Welded by Nature's links, challeng'd by sentinel Death,
Fed by my dearest thoughts or ever he drew breath,—
The child is mine!

A thousand men have liv'd and lov'd for him,
For olden wrongs lurk, wolf-like, dark and grim,
Behind him: pain, desire and sin's dark ban
Bestrode his path before his life began;
And,—the child is mine!

Not all the turbulence of the poignant past,
Nor all the midnight secrets that o'ercast
His little soul's clear purity can charm
The fact away. Come death, come storm or calm,
The child is *mine!*

Two Epigrams

A PORTRAIT, A.H.G.

A GENTLE youth with dark and soul-lit eyes,
Where twinkling thought and fleeting fancy lies;
A calm pale brow that shows each passing phase
Of budding beauty in a thousand ways.

SORROW

RISE poet and sing
In sad, sobbing strain;
To our souls solace bring
Again and again.
For woe, when expressed
With tear-thrilling throes,
Brings sweet-scented rest
And sunny repose!

Temperament

THE thundering passion of Niagra's fall,
Or snow-clad stillness of the mountain's height,
Is each contented in its place, and all
Nature shows God's transfiguring delight.
Man is alone dissatisfied with Fate,—
Heaven's restful calm leaves him in discontent,
Nor passion's power can he obliterate :
Disturbed by calm and by emotions spent.

When Night has Fallen

WHEN night has fallen, and the stars are out,

I seek my couch, to muse upon thy face;
And I am sick with yearning. Round about
Are phantom forms that fill the air with grace;
And yet, and yet, my cheeks are wet with tears,
For only one boy-form can bring surcease to all my fears!

'Tis thine my Princeling: tender soul within

Looks out in every line of pink and white,
Inspiring my stained heart to look from sin
(Where Grief has bled) to Innocence's height.
How mighty is love's fervour when we lie
Lips close to lips, to breathe away the pain of days gone by!

I have loved wildly in the wayward past,

Placed laurels on my head and myrrh on mouth,—
Seeking oblivion, as the Attics cast
Stones from their shores toward the gleaming south;
But all the time, even when the song was loud,
I hungered for a love like thine, where Purity is vowed!

I love thee, Princeling! Nothing can derange
This strong affection. 'Neath the watching sky
I pledge anew my faith, grown almost strange
By pressure o' the years. Keen memory
Will bring me safely to your presence,—grown
More loyal and more fervent from this exile borne alone!

For an Autograph Album

'Tis but a little book, as yet unspoiled,
Or rendered rich by those who dream and know!
Shall blind conceit obscure its leaves? Or show
Upon its whiteness gems that men have toiled
Through daring hours to perfect, as thought coiled
Or opened out within? Let virile concepts go
Into these pages,—and, as breezes blow
Both hot and cold, may Fancy ne'er be foiled!

I am content, and ask no more of it
Than that all here may show sincerity:
Write unafraid; for Faith and Dignity
Can only come when thought is freely writ. . . .
See! On yon hill the fleecy cloud may sit
Radiant, that in the depths looms mistily!

Waiting

Ivory dawn and crimson noon,
Sultry purple afternoon,
Primrose eve and twilight gray—
I have waited all the day!

When the shadowy moon is high
In an amaranthine sky,
Visions faintly round me gleam,
And I wait as in a dream.

Yearning, longing ardently,
Wishing, craving passionately,
Watching, hoping—but for what?
God must know, if I do not!

Roses have I flung around
On the ever-ready ground;
And my feet have learned to dance
To a tune composed by Chance.

Rapture meets me at all hours,
Wreathes my hair with dewy flowers;
And my pulses know the beat
Cadenced by Life's twinkling feet.

To my soul has Nature spoken :
Given great gifts as her token—
For my lips are held apart
To the singing of my heart.

And, withal, I still am waiting,
Still am yearning, palpitating
For the joy that lingers long,
Formless, wordless, as this song.

Ivory dawn and crimson noon
(What, ah! what is Mystery's boon?)
Primrose eve and twilight gray—
Shall I watch,—*both night and day?*

A Charity School

IN 'ninety-seven our big-whigs made a trial
Of teaching poorer children how to go
Through life with strength and fortitude, and so
A school for orphans opened was at Styal.
These children's cheeks are red, there's no denial;
And they have learned their aptitude to show
In many ways. . . . While summer breezes blow
I watch them loudly play at *Touch the Dial*.

Erewhile these lads and lasses lived in gloom
Of grimy court, insanitary street.
Mark now the twinkling of their well-shod feet!
I'll speak to one: "My lad, have you got room
For one within? Your life has idyll, bloom!"
"Get out! Yer kiddin'! Just got 'nough to eat!"

Fragment

THE song of the thrush was sweeter,
Far sweeter, love, to-day :
It thrilled and it keened and filled me,
Till it took my heart away.

For its song seemed like to an angel's
That into my senses grew :
I saw the streets of God's Heaven,
And the angel . . . ah, sweet, 'twas you !

On the Shore

UNDERNEATH the rugged shelter
Of the rude gray cliffs we stood;
While the north wind shrilled around us,
And the tide was at its flood.
There I yearned to know my fortune,
And my heart was full of fears:
Though your silence made God's music
Sound exultant in my ears.

In the darkness, broken only
By the light of drifting moon,
Still I waited, wondering, fearing,
As the ocean ceased to croon—
For the tide was coming nearer,
Full of menace, full of power;
And the anguish of that moment
Seemed to lengthen to an hour.

Sudden came a daring billow,
With a roar that drowned our sighs;

And the rushing, laughing Triton
Dashed his tear-drops in your eyes.
You were timid. . . . I took courage,
Dared my fortitude to prove. . . .
Caught you to me,—and the ocean
Sang a song of Love, sweet Love!

Prince

TELL, O tell me why—the reason that you find the lad so fair?

(Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince)

Because the sunlight has been caught within his russet hair?

Is it for this?

Not this the bliss,

Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince!

Tell, O tell me why—the reason that you find the lad so fair?

(Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince)

Because he loves you is he beautiful? His soul to share

Makes life a song?

You do him wrong,

Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince!

Then tell, O tell me why—the reason that you find the lad so fair?

(Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince)

Because I love him, he is beautiful! My wisdom's there!

Love's mighty flame

Wakes at his name,

Prince, my Prince, my Fairy Prince!

A Spring Idyll

THEY sat on a low wall together,
At the first rosy touch of the dawn ;
Deliciously warm was the weather,
While the sky mingled opal and fawn.

From the sea came the song of the surges :
(Each wave wore its garment of gold.)
And its message to Youth never dirge is—
So the boy his first love-story told.

By chance 'twas his tenth birthday morning,
And she had met seven, maybe eight ;
For Love comes to some in the dawning
Of Life, and to others—too late!

O mystical hour of Love's Wooing,
While the sun lifted high his warm crest ;
And the sea hushed its song to low cooing—
Love's Kiss in the Morning is best!

Song

WAKE him again to the song that I sing,
Breeze o'er the bending corn;
Tenderly touch him to say that I bring
Songs at the early morn!

I, who have loved him, would meet him again :
Speak to him then for me;
Press his pale brow, and so bring to my pain
Solace and sympathy.

Wake him again,—for I hold him so dear
That my only hope is to be
Wrapped in his arm, with his soft cheek a-near
Tenderly, tenderly!

High Noon

A PURPLE passion came to us that day :

We walked the valley where the lad's-love grows;
And in the hedges, ruby-red and gay
A rose hung bleeding, and again a rose.

We talked of love; and he sank on the sward,

 Drawing me nearer in a warm embrace :
We felt each nerve beat keenly; and toward
 Each other drew, till lips fed on cool face.

“ Ah! Love-lies-bleeding! ” Soon our moment passed,

 And, softly rising, I said in his ear :
“ How sweet is lad's-love! ” “ But it does not last! ”
 He murmured in reply, with sudden tear.

Then I (the elder) on my dreams intent

 Plucked many handfuls, piled them at his feet :
“ You are the Prince of Lad's-Love,—and its scent
 Was meant for bosom, not one whit less sweet! ”

“ Would that 'twere true, and I e'en as this stem! ”

 The boyish words half sounded like a cry;
His kisses fell all-hungrily on them,—
 But I caressed him, saying, “ These flowers must die! ”

Winter has come, and all the fields are bare;
I sit alone, and dream of his dear face:
His look, his voice, his manner, and his air
Of wistful innocence and childish grace.

'Tis true, alas! 'tis true that blossoms fade:
Earth's sweetest gems are to the sight denied:
Gone is the lad's-love from the open glade,
And he—he went before the lad's-love died!

Admonition

O LOVELY boy, a very Prince
'Mong others dost thou move :
A gentle comrade to thy friends—
But ah! a foe to Love!

The simple flush upon thy cheek,
Though fragrant as a rose,
Was born of crimson autumn eves :
Chill as the mountain snows.

Not from the limpid brook thine eyes
Their mystic mirth have ta'en—
But from prismatic floating isles
That arctic circles chain.

And thy red lips (to poppies kin)
Yield silvered bitterness,—
While that low voice, for music framed,
Wears scorn's ungraceful stress.

(In olden days strong Orpheus
Compelled the rocks to own
Love's greater spell.) Could even Greek
Melt such a heart of stone?

I fear me no! Thy obdurate soul
Despair to lover brings:
And Orpheus too might own defeat
Before such raptured stings!

To One in Heaven

Now have you many homes, O sweetest one,
Where we have none save this perplexing earth :
You have the clouds, the stars, the august sun,
The virginal higher birth !

Your song will cling around the breathless spheres,
While here is shade, and gnawing pain and fret :
You have the noon-shine,—we the mist of tears,
And endless sorrow. . . . Yet

Albeit each sad heart is lashed with grief,
We lift them up to you in hope and prayer :
O Angel-one bring solace and relief,—
The strength our cross to bear !

We chant our halting notes with troubled breath,
Our trembling fingers shake the lute's wild strings :
But if you link your voice to ours, pale Death
No desolation brings !

Immortal, free, untrammelled at the bars
Of Heaven you soar,—love-crowned as when you trod
Our mundane plane,—eternal as the stars,
Or as your boundless God !

Sometimes look down; and teach us how to sing
The fruitful psalms, known in that lucent morn :
And let us feel the touch of your warm wing
In this, our dismal bourne.

For you are native of the dazzling spheres;
And in Christ's courts you serve eternally :
Yet carry when you can to temporal ears
Your starry minstrelsy !

Tommy Todd

A **SUNNY** sky over sunnier sea,
And a great green wave that slouches in,
While we sit on the beach,—just you and me,—
And around us the others make noise and din.
On the far horizon the gleam of a sail,
Which flames into gold on the ocean's blue,—
And the clouds gloom purple or red or pale,
As the gulls speed past our enchanted view!
Can you recall,
At the year's slow fall,
That picture of light, gold-shod?
Sweet, neat, fair and sweet,
Neat little Tommy Todd?

The harvest-field, in which reapers shout,
While far on the hill the horses run;
The gleam of the scythes, and round about
The swooning heat of an August sun;
But under the hedge the smile of the rose,
And lunch in the shade of a leafy lime:
Of every Eden that Eros knows
Was there ever an equal on earth, or in time?
Can you recall,
At the year's slow fall,
That picture of golden-rod?
Sweet, neat, fair and sweet,
Neat little Tommy Todd?

Love and Death

(After Watts' Picture, Whitworth Institute, Manchester)

A CHILD's nude breast, before a shrouded Thing :
(Soul's protest 'gainst the Body) thrusting out
The pale, sad feet of Death : but meshed about
By impotence and youth and fragile wing.
Yea! Eagerness has spoken in the sting
Of this brief struggle : while the boyish shout
Is yet upon Love's lips, Death slays with drought
The Darling One, beneath his arm's wide fling.

Alas! The tale is true! Love may not turn
Gaunt Fate away! Eros disconsolate
The onward march may momentary bate;
But Age must win o'er Youth. So though we yearn
To see the struggle through, we can discern
Love i' the dust, beaten—and blest too late!

Impromptu : Suggested by S.M.

You cannot die! As when the day is past
The moon a milder glory sheds around,
So will your spirit linger to the last,
Near to your silent body in the ground.

Silent? Mayhap—for snowy breasts will turn
To lilies o' the valley; and your hands
To golden-hearted peonies that will burn,
Till crimsoned o'er with glory are the lands.

When men have buried you beneath the sod,
Your cloven lips a red, red rose shall be;
And level brows, that proudly speak of God,
Shall emulate the pearly narcissi.

Ah! If I lie a-near you in the ground,
Mayhap the wind will thrill us to its joy;
And we will wake together at the sound
To be once more strong man and ardent boy!

My spirit throbs in hope of that sweet death,
When Nature shall be sister and a queen,—
When beast and bird and flower shall hold our breath,
And we shall not be bondslaves of the Seen!

Think of it, dearest—we shall pass into
All sensuous being,—equal with the dawn,—
The sunshine and the moonbeam and the dew,
The dryad and the centaur and the faun!

The thrush's chaunt, the nightjar's plaintive psalm,
All feathered singers shall be ours to hear;
And in the winter we shall fear no harm,
For then the robin's breast will draw more near.

Notes shall we be in one grand harmony,
Whose rhythmic beats aspire toward the sky :
And in whatever form our spirits may be,
Love shall be ours,—*Sweetest, we cannot die!*

Alec

(To Alec Fischer, for a photograph in Bathing Costume)

YOUR face is not divine; but softly wrought
Are your white shoulders which strong muscles hide.
I like you thus, and am most satisfied
That you have posed, as in a sculptor's thought.
Watching your sinuous breasts makes me distraught,
In memory of the time when we defied
The indolence of flesh; and magic taught
Each to the other, and no thrill denied!

Man's loveliest labours are conceived in pain,—
The charms of woman-nature meet in you,
Intense, defined, exquisite; and I knew
Both poles of feeling in your love's refrain.
Years hurry each to marriage,—but the strain
Of the sweet past shall haunt us, old yet new!

To My Mother

Your weary head, O let me feel at rest
Upon my heart. Scarce can I bear to gaze
Upon it without tears; for on your breast
I lay a weakling in my stammering days.

From out the mart that stains and mars the soul
I seek one hour of pure and perfect peace;
And in your arms I reach the further pole
Of heavenly joy, where gnawing sorrows cease!

Sleep then upon my aching heart, O sleep!
And gathered thus may angels reach our side;
That through the coming years I safe may keep
The shadow of the love which life denied!

Street Arabs Dancing

AN oasis upon an arid plain !

These children half entrance me in their fun :

I love to mark their frolic in the dun

Light o' the streets. Far more am I than fain
To call them linnets, squirrels; and my pain

Is all forgotten when the day is done.

For heart is moved to pity,—fancies run
As thick as berries 'mid this spongy rain.

They dance in groups, with secrets in their gaze

Of things romantic—Music-Hall-ish theme!

Puck leads their footsteps in ecstatic beam,

And none save youth can touch their pregnant praise :
Each mind is all-forgetful, in a phase

Of things ideal, not what they may seem !

Invocation

SHY boy, shy boy,
Shyest of your kind;
If you were of my mind,
You'd not sit apart,
But enter my warm heart,
Shy boy, shy boy!

(He cons a dog-eared book,
And bends his brown head low :
But could I catch his look
Such work he would forego.)

Shy boy, shy boy,
See the evening falls,
And the nightjar calls :
Shy boy, shy boy,
Will you court the gloom,
Or seek a lighter room?

(Shyer than a cricket,
Meeker than a dove,
He was meant for rapture,
Made for love, for love!)

After the Greek of Theocritus

THEY listen to these platitudes unvexed,—
 Thirty strong lads; but by the gods! I swear
 That I am sick of thought, count it unfair
That summer hours should hover round a text
So feebly old. Why! What will follow next?
 The air is close within, and blood should care
 For its delight. I'm half inclined to dare
The lecturer's frown, ere I become unsexed!

In passing, let me touch the nut-brown hand
 Of yonder youth. His eyes have challenged mine. . . .
 The open street, the field, ambrosial wine
Of August, and his comradeship's command.
Now let us seek some stream, and in it stand
 Bare to the hips, and talk of things—Divine!

The Unwelcome

Love's little hand came knocking at the door
 Of my young heart—
The rosy palm beat softly at the door :
 I cried "Depart!"
 " But I am weary, and the night is long;
 Within is warmth and feasting, light and song :
 Bid me come in that I may share your joy."
". . . My guests are many. Get you gone, fair boy—
 I count you foe,
 And bid you, *Go!*"

Love's little hand came knocking at the door
 Of my old heart—
The rosy palm beat softly at the door :
 I cried "Depart,
 For love o' God! I am both weak and frail :
 My youth is dead, and every bud is pale!"
 "I will come in. . . ." Thrown are the portals wide :
 "So be it—in this cheerless room abide!"
 He trembles—"No :
 'Tis cold as snow!"

Golden Stairs

THE common parlance of the counting-house

I have to speak from nine o'clock to seven;
But all the while my soul is at carouse

With abstract things, all gloriously given;
And when I am alone one moment's space
I hear a singing voice throughout the place!

I listen wonderingly, and lift mine eyes :

I do not dare to scorn a syllable;
I must not mock at Love's known paradise,
Where all is sweet as any marriage-bell!
Let gods with feet of clay be basely theirs :
I keep my vision of the Golden Stairs!

In Church

THERE are three things I shall recall, while memory holds her seat:

Three little things while Time beside us flies—
The soft touch of your hand in mine; the sunshine at your feet;

The mingled trust and dread in your clear eyes.

March 25th, 1908.

Jim: A Picture

(To James Henry Richardson, for many pleasant hours)

A boy I know, whose eyes are full and gray,
Beneath straight brows and hair of honey hue.
He walks the earth undaunted, staunch and true,
As if the gods had given him right of way
Through every path. What money cannot pay
In gold for's his,—an optimism new
With each day's sun: the wish and will to do
His duty with a smile, whate'er men say!

He puts on tights and jerkin, looking trim
As youthful pageboy in Revivals here;
And when I smile approval (no small beer)
His head goes up in pride, and full of vim
He cries out rapturously: "Ah, never fear;
I'll be an actor some day!" *That's my Jim!*

Summer and Winter

WHEN all his locks were golden,
Like most to ripened wheat,
He sang of warmth and summer,
Of flowers and lightsome feet.

Anon his hair was brindled,
And brackets wreathed his mouth :
He thought him of brown autumn,
And sang of coming drouth.

But—just because the snowflakes
Are falling on his brow—
He needs must sing of winter,
And *only* winter now !

Boy Extracting Thorn

(Marble at Florence)

THE fairest nymph from out the limpid stream,
Lying at ease beneath the swooning heat,
Is not so finely shaped from head to feet,
Nor delicately sweet in Beauty's Dream,
As these bent shoulders (slimmer than they seem),
Or lithe thin legs, whose loveliness complete
Mocks at the pride of manhood,—for replete
In every line is Innocence's beam.

He bends his anxious head above the toe,
Extracting from his languid flesh the thorn :
A very flower of life, as yet upborne
On stem of shamelessness,—perfected so
By fifteen springs. . . . The thorn he seeks below,
Is planted in the gazer's heart, love-torn!

Bathers

(After Walker's Canvas)

THEIR garments lie upon the sun-kissed grass,
And,—clothed alone in their young loveliness,—
These boys but wade or lounge in idleness,
While summer's blossoms hail them as they pass.
A warmer glow of radiance on the glass
Of purling stream responds to each caress
Made by exultant limbs in nakedness,
That erewhile fidgetted and fumed in class.

Great painter of this thrilling theme, I hail
Thee Beauty's Prophet; for thine eyes have seen
The Secret Rose of all the World! I ween
That as thy models posed in red or pale
Garments of flesh, thy practised eye the tale
Of Life had mastered,—Love the Whole and Clean!

Some Other Night

SOME other Night, you tell me, shall be given
To clasp of hands, fresh kisses and dear love :
Sweet promise of caresses! While above
Is radiant atmosphere of Eros' heaven
You gage to me the flower with petals seven.

So day by day you curb my ardour, even
To the last breath, while courage back is driven;
To wait, and wait for that rare treasure-trove
Some other Night!

Ah, love, I know. . . . But hearts may not be riven
For ever thus. Though I may ne'er be shriven
Of my sweet sin, I claim you for my dove
This very hour—lest you should learn to love
Some other Knight!

CAMEOS OF AN ENGLISH
BOYHOOD

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*These Poems partly replace a private edition of
“Through Veiled Eyes” (1908).*

I.

The Second Mother

Do you recall the urgent pitiless rain,
Along the sedge low-hissing, as we passed
With scurrying feet, and reached the house at last
Through fierce wind wailing! Then (our supper ta'en)
We all went to the music-room, where fain
To be informed, Prince Charming, much downcast
By solitude, wept at our news ; held fast
Within your arms, his "mother," novel gain.

Then at his father's (now your husband's) side
You played from Chopin; but the dismal cries
For light of that dead poet filled our eyes
With tears for wasted moments. And we sighed
To think what wealth of intercourse had died
With that great vow "I will," what melodies!

II.

In Memoriam : S.M.

One asked me for the secret of my faith
In restless Youth; whereat I answer made
With serious words. He seemed annoyed, dismayed,
At tribute that this halting number payeth

To vigorous human life. My poet sayeth,
“Love’s sinews in the soul are unafraid.”
Thus take I counsel of the heart, being paid
From mint of sense, and guided by Love’s breath.

Even such am I! I chose my hero: then
Made him a model, brain and mood and nerve.
He lived right fully; and upon the swerve
Into the pit, I pitied him. For when
His nature snared him most I knew that men
Must hail him god at last . . . I, too, must serve!

III.

The Tomb of Inspiration

I may not write to order; for the fount
Protests that it is dry, and ancient wrongs
Surge black within my heart to slay the songs,
That erewhile made the tedious thoughts to mount
On eagle wings,—away from things that count
As dross, or babbling folly of the throngs.
May then a town-bred poet count the tongues
Of men ignoble, and their woes discount?

Perhaps a face may wake him in the ray
Of misty morning, or soft prattle speak
Unto his soul; but he must ever seek
Something on which the soul may brood alway,
Dwelling apart. Enthralled with Beauty’s play,
He needs must shun the valley for the peak!

IV.

A Moonlit Picture

A night in winter, when the mantling snow
Had stilled the world to silence, I recall:
 Against the pane its iterate tender fall,
Fleeing the wind in rugged fields below.
My "T.O.T." in bed, reluctant yet to go
 To shadowed vales of rest; his whispered call
 For some account of Love's unchanging thrall,
And my response in Romeo's rhythmic flow.

And while I tell him of fair Juliet,
 The cadenced lines accompanied by the flakes
 Upon the glass, his moonlit child-face takes
A deeper wonder, and his mouth is set
Into a rose of rapture. . . . Closer yet
 His lips to mine for these dead lovers' sakes!

V.

In March

During an hour I watch him standing there
 Guard of the goal, with naught to move his ease;
 Yet, all the while, defensive arms and knees
Are ready for attack. His form is bare
Of all save knickers and a vest; his hair
 Is ruffled and at stir in chilling breeze.
 His young face glows with rapt attention,—tease
Him as you will, he's not caught unaware.

See! Mellow red on cheek and dew on lip,—
The centre-forward missed his kick. . . . Here slide
A frenzied knot towards him. Open-eyed
The post he keeps. . . . With rapid noble rip
He hurls his puny body on them. . . . Whip-p-p!
The ball's to field! That kick has saved his side!

VI.

Something Discovered

Come, let us linger near the hawthorn bush,
Where sun and leaves have rootless bridal made.
It is a place where faun and nymph delayed
Their languid feet before the morn's inrush.
How sweet the scent,—and listen to that thrush,
Whose palpitating song his debt has paid
Unto the day's repose! No sound shall fade
From out our minds, attentive and at hush.

Drink in the scene, my Prince, with all your eyes.
Heedless and hurried mortals rarely see
These mingled patterns of earth's tapestry,
Stitched by the silent hands of Paradise.
When we return we shall have poet-guise
Upon our brows: blood immortality.

VII.

Happiness and Shade

Inquisitive, alert, in greeny nook
My Prince oft nestled to me in the shade,

And problem after problem deftly made,
As if for library my brain he took.
And then with temperate and persuasive look
The highest compliment of all he paid :
“ Write me a poem, please.” Each word was weighed
As one might test gold found in barren brook.

“ That rhyme is weak; this passage doesn’t scan.”
Oh, throbbing voice like to an angel’s song :
“ I’m sure the cadence of this line is wrong! ”
“ A hit indeed! But tell me, little man,
Where hast acquired thy wisdom? ” So began
Love’s argument to which all sweets belong!

VIII.

Within the Cave

A cave I know, where Love exalts a theme
Of adolescence, scarce as yet discreet
For outer world. Prince Charming at my feet
Lures by soft wiles the water’s sunny beam,
While I regard him smiling, in a dream
About the ivory of his flesh,—as sweet
As any flower. Then, basking in the heat,
We are entangled in Love’s stratagem.

All through my life shall memory hold thee dear,
Thou noisy cave, where vines cling close above
With endless wooing. Here at noon came Love
To sway our souls, eradicating fear;
For His sweet sake thy shelter shall appear
The fairest bower built by the nested dove!

IX.

Above the Stair

Those mornings in the double-bedded room
I never shall forget. My breezy boys
Wakeful and cheery, apt for play and noise :
Still in their shirts, alive with health and bloom.
Within the garden close the cheery boom
Of bees in search of dew. My Prince's voice
Chanting a tag; then Albert's legs at poise,
In Highland Fling, across a broken broom.

And while I sit and laugh at them, the hiss
Of cooking from the kitchen will ascend.
Like dormice have they slept. But now defend
Who can against their frolic! All the bliss
Of Youth is theirs: clear eyes, fresh cheeks,—and this,
Best boon of all, a visitor as friend!

X.

Bathers

We four were seated in one bathing-van :
Dusky-skinned Ibra, Albert and my Prince;
Then, while my Afric *garçon* tried to rinse
Soap and salt water o'er his palms, began
A dispute on the temperature, and ran
The words hot-footed. “ *Il fait froid!* ” But since
'Twas my own holiday words must convince;
I cried, “ No bathing then for you, young man! ”

Forthwith we left our shivering friend; plunged back;
And my Prince sported with me on the beach,
Submitting when I kissed him,—each to each
Sufficient. Sudden rang his clear tones, “ Jack,
I want to ask you something.” “ I will teach
You all I can.” “ Is Ibra’s *body* black? ”

XI.

High Summer

The harvest fields are crimson, red on red,
And glow on glow of poppies in the corn.
I love these soft medallions, boldly torn,
And eager courage of each nodding head.
I love their show, because my Prince has said
That they are emblems of a heart forlorn,
And typify a passion newly-born
That has not found the fount from which ’tis fed.

’Tis passing strange these rumours should be his :
And when I lift my hand to pluck a flower,
Behold! his smaller palm has greater power,—
For he has drawn them o’er him. . . . Raptured bliss,
Of studious flowers, whose blushing faces kiss
His rosier cheeks!—content ye with your hour!

XII.

Gratitude

I bless God for you each night on my knees,
Because I con you like an open book.
There is such comfort in one curious look,
That gold and glamour wake whene’er you please.

Yes, little Prince, for me you hold the keys
Of that blest symphony which throbbed and shook
Israfel's heaven. Harmony never took
So fair a priest as you in hours of ease!

Should Spring refuse to crown the silent year,
And daisies sleep ungrown within the sod,
Or every other face show sensual rod
In bleak blank lines of pain and sin and fear—
I could but choose to ask that Life should rear
One simple flower,—my precious Tommy Todd!

XIII.

In Protest

Why frown because he makes one wilful move
Toward the gulf? This wayward boy will bear
His burden no less nobly. Do not spare,
Because of this, your sympathy and love.
The world's to blame, who lays her treasure-trove
Lavishly before him: fascinations rare!
Her nursing knee is treacherous,—for her care
Will slacken later, and his merit prove.

Take heart, O fond ones; he to lean must learn
Upon his own reliance. Better friend
Am I in teaching your dear lad to spend
His days restless, than in Youth to spurn
All love and pain. He will enjoy return,
And bless the gods for knowledge at the end!

XIV.

Idle Days

At morn I cried, “ Wake, Prince; for limpid light
Shines on the fields. And, hark, the throstle’s song!
The day is ours, each crystal minute long
With lucid rapture for our heart’s delight.
We will until the eve glut hearing, sight,
And every sense the active fields among.
The oaks and elms have all a fancied wrong
Against the breeze. Ah! listen to their plight!”

The window opened to his aureoled face,
And wanton winds caught at each tangled hair;
Large sleepy eyes looked down at me. “ Forbear!”
I said : “ Keep silence generous; I can trace,
Bent thus, your mystic dreams!” Anon a race
Of expectation made his face more fair!

XV.

Unseasonable Languor

“ This is not cricket!” smiling I protest.
His o’erworn body on the sward lies slack,
The sun-kissed hands clasped lightly on his back,
While rose-leaf face is buried in his breast.
“ Three minutes only are allowed for rest;
And you are learning to acquire the knack
Of rapid bowling.” Then I see the black
Beneath his guileless eyes—and know the test!

“ Ah! you are tired?” (That brilliant baby skin
Of his must last unstained throughout the years!)

I stoop to press his hand, the while great fears
Grip at my heart. . . . But soon he enters in
Among the players, rested, eager—tears
Dried on his cheeks, and makes the leather spin!

XVI.

On Modern Ways

I like it not, your creed of cruel things,
Full only of the lust of wealth and war.
Go to the envious! Leave my simpler star
Undimmed by blood—the while my nature sings.
Why seek to mark each soul with stripes and stings
And ruddy specks? Surely, 'tis better far
To be inept or weak, than conqueror
Over the suffering, and to steal their wings!

I am contented with obscurity,
And will not lend my ear to your behest.
“God’s in His Heaven!” Thus, I deem it best
To bow beneath the statement patiently.
Your message is not Love’s—and while I see
My soul at full, why covet I the rest?

XVII.

In Prospect of Fulfilment

Some ancient wrong had stirred my soul to pain,
And I knelt sobbing with a fevered brow;
When lo! my Prince’s arm around me: “Now,
This will not do,” he sagely said. “The chain

Of our affection must be roses, ta'en
Only from sunny plots!" Ah, fruitful vow
That made me his beneath the autumn bough!
We wandered out into the shadowy lane.

The symphony of life we understood,
And all the straining air was clear, and fraught
With holy aspiration; and our thought
Went up in prayer, till in sublimer mood
I took his hands in mine. . . . Thou God art good
Who gave me Love's frail pathos all unbought!

XVIII.

Poets at Play

Albeit I was born beneath the brume
My lines seem all concerned with summer closes—
With only pleasant paths and radiant roses.
Some think that, hence, my fancies have no room
For aught but joy and Nature's wealthiest bloom.
The reason why my rhyme untroubled flows is
That inspiration which the poet knows, is
Bliss scorned of bliss, unique with Death and Doom.

When darkness falls, and all the lamps expire,
Men will behold their poets sick and lame,—
Ignobly conscious of frustrated aim!
They strive awhile to chant their heart's desire,
Making men kingly 'neath an opal fire,
Yet all the while are wrung with gilt and blame!

XIX.

The End

He asked if he were good? before he died.
They told him that an angel he had been;
And when he passed away their anguish keen
Was tinctured by the thought that they had lied.
He had been wilful, oft his tasks denied:
But now they only thought that they had seen
His boyish escapades and childish spleen
For the last time, and could no longer chide!

And I—I knew that restless hands would twine
Around my neck no more, nor pluck my sleeve.
Fancy nor fact would ever serve to weave
Those rosebud lips to realness laid on mine;
Each daring touch of naughtiness divine
Had made him Spirit,—that I would believe!

XX.

Quiet Waters of Grief

I give one lingering look at his dead face;
They deem it strange I do not weep or moan,
For he has been heart's-brother. He alone
May know how much I loved him, and may trace

The currents of my soul. This solemn place
Has witnessed our delight, as we have sown
The seeds of grave content while days have flown. . . .
Ah! full heart's overflow and pulses' race!

What matter I weep nothing? I dare tell
Of my affection when their lips are dumb.
He died that I might worship; and the knell
That plucks at these torn hearts is marriage-bell
To my heart's core. Let Spring or Winter come,
I keep my watch untiring. All is well!

XXI.

Echo and Response

The ocean's silken smile, secretive, cool,
Brings back the dreadful trial of the past;
The silence and the sunshine seem to cast
A veil around my senses. O mad fool
To yearn for him again! Easy to school
Your soul to patience; for, behold! at last,
If Death be Love, your arms will hold him fast
Beside the glistening waters of Heaven's Pool!

The vanished loveliness of form and face,
Great eyes and treasure of his auburn hair,
Will yet be yours. For meeting on the stair
A moment of exquisite holy grace
Will be vouchsafed; and hungry fingers trace
Each subtle charm beneath the Angel's care!

Waiting—Not in Vain

The stealthy tide creeps up the snow-clad beach,
The restless gulls are screaming to the sea;
Ah! who will bring my darling back to me,
And who incline our faces each to each?
This hawthorn bough has little hope to teach,
Yet holly-berries clasp him fervently.
Ah! who will bring my darling back to me
Across the weary miles o'er which I reach?

The sky is dark, and very cold to see;
The sand is lone and worn as my sad heart.
Bleak is my soul; and acrid tear-drops start.
Ah! who will bring my darling back to me,
Across this moaning and relentless sea,
Ere darkness falls upon life's empty mart?

STRAY THOUGHTS

To Bosa,
without whom my sojourn
in O.—March, 1908, to
August, 1909—would have
been empty.
May happiness always be
yours!

A Song of the Hills

IN vernal hours, so fresh with flowers,
And sweet with sylvan song,
When riding high across the sky
The sun makes spring-day long;
While overhead the heavens are spread
In depths of azure, bright
With fold on fold of clouded gold,
And palpitating light;
The herdsmen cry—
“Lura la, la, la, là, lí, ooò.”

The noonday scene is fair and green,
With sturdy tuft and tree;
The south winds blow, the streamlets flow,
And strains from bird and bee
Are flung around in raptured sound
Of thrilling music, and
With mystic rhyme the far-off chime
Melodious makes the land;
The herdsmen cry—
“Lura la, la, la, là, lí, ooò.”

O sweetest lays of living days,
And scenes of brilliant bloom!
Your potent power makes glad the hour,
And brightens sorrow's gloom;
Ah! let me win a bliss akin
To song so sweetly sung;
Reap from this lore oft heard before
A purer, loftier tongue;
The herdsmen cry—
“Lura la, la, la, là, lí, ooò.”

Were We So Cold ?

WERE we so cold, you could not tread this earth
On rugged path for weary miles untold?
You did not stay to test our ampler worth:
W_ere we so cold?

Yet Nature did not hide from you the gold
Of her rich store, nor did you lack in mirth;
The fault lay nearer to ourselves. . . . Ah! bold

And fearless traveller through another birth,
All gifts of time and change your hands shall hold
In yonder sky; but answer to our dearth—
W_ere we so cold?

Sweetest Flower

PRINCE, sweetest flower,
Known to earth, twins
Death—brightest dower,
Prince!

Not long is it since
We felt all the power
That love may evince;

And now Heaven's Tower
A rare ruby wins,—
Gone from our bower,
Prince!

Poetry and Desire

I.

I ASK not in a world like ours
That sun should shine alway;
I shall be happy if the hours
Bring night as well as day;
But this, O God! I do entreat
With trembling heart and tongue,
Ah! let me hear Life's pulses beat
And answer in a Song!

II.

I saw a star against the sky : a restless, radiant thing,
I cried unto the heavens for it—('twas in the sunny Spring);
But suddenly one last long ray I saw it downward fling,
Then rush into the gathering gloom on swiftly dying wing!

A Woman's Way

THEY stood in a quaint old country town,
And shelter'd under a tree;
Simple was he, with a skin of brown,
And pretty and proud was she.
And day by day did he woo her there,
In sunshine or in rain,
But ever she said with haughty air—
“We must not meet again!”

And day by day they met at eve,
Be the weather wet or fine;
Beneath the tree they would make believe,
Till he asked, “Wilt thou be mine?
Let us be lovers, and share the day,
We have waited through the rain.”
But the maiden turned her head away—
“We must not meet again!”

The night falls at last with dusky wings,
And silent 'neath the tree
Stands the maiden, while the night-jar sings
In poignant threnody;
And one pleads yet with tender tone—
He whispers brokenly—
“The night is come; I am all alone.”
“Thou art mine, I am thine,” said she.

One in Prison

“I am ill, miserable, tired—how I suffer I cannot tell you, but life seems a weary burden.”

Letter from Wandsworth Gaol, *August, 1895.*

I.

GRAY, pallid dawn, forgotten of the sun,
Drifting weird clouds across a tent of sky;
Then sudden darkness, long harsh night begun,
What bird could call to bid the day, “Good-bye”?

Dawns thus, nights thus, and never a change,
This tedious while of weeks in the dead year:
A butterfly in the tainted light looks strange,
A birth unnatural in a world so drear.

No pulse of vibrant Nature beats and thrills
Within these walls where vilest weeds are born;
Here is the acid humid air that kills,
And rusts the soul, the while the heart is worn!

II.

Frangible is life, and here no roses blow;
Creatures but sigh, and sicker out their day
In abject pain, the like man may not know
Who has not given his better self away.

What gain results from grim and gnarring age?
Mark how the dismal days drag wearily:
This is our vaunted justice! How assuage
The heart-ache of this soul's mad misery?

For all this time he knows where, too far hence,
Through earth's pure pores the year's young life leaps
forth:
Where air is drunken with a quickening sense;
Where sky of blue is east, west, south, and north.

Where, diamond-decked the dew shines on the grass,
In trembling adoration of the sun,
Who soon in all his majesty will pass
From out his rosy-curtain'd pavilion.

Where snow-white lilies, blushing at the marge,
And rose-carnations, tinged with amethyst,
Crowding upon the sunny acres large
Are peering forth in thousands, sunshine kiss'd.

III.

O angel-flowers, whose scents fresh, mystic, coy,
Close in the heart like childhood's earliest hope,
Give him your secret and your faithful joy,—
Lend him th' allurement of your verdant slope.

Ah, give him ease! Beneath the ruddy shield
Of the bright sky the summer blossoms gleam;
The larks have nested in the unmown field,
And rise in rapture near the elfin stream.

Young children, greedy for the flowers, make haste
For nosegays which the busy fields hold out :—
Your world is full of flowers : enough to waste,
For as you scatter down the buds you pout!

Sebastian! dark is Wandsworth Gaol to-day,
Your life lags numbed! But Pity's fragrant urn
Is broken for your sake, and I, who pay
Sin's tribute, am your brother, and may mourn!

Afterward

“ YES, she is wed,” the people say,
With smug and placid look;
I saw him with her yesterday,—
She dallied with a book.

Her eyes looked at me fearfully—
What consciousness was this?
A sudden flush ran over me:
Did he suspect that kiss?

Ah! They are married: all is well!
But in her haunted eyes
Are thoughts too deep for lips to tell,
And clinging memories.

In Cheshire

(An Acrostic)

A MUSE art thou of all my simple songs,
Nestling like wayside flower of greatest worth,
Nurturing the weary vision of the throngs
Imbued with pain,—an alien on the earth,
Elusive, tender, full of maiden mirth!

Knit strongly to my heart thy loftier aim!
Need I look down while thine is honour'd name?
I claim thee : thou art she who, lov'd, rever'd,
Gleaming athwart my youthful days appear'd,
Holy and pure, to wake my slumb'rous brain
To thoughts of time, tears and life's thrilling strain.

Youth passes swift,—but murmurs round me rain
Of days to come beneath your love's soft beam.
Unless you live to supervise my theme
Naught else can satisfy my pride elate,—
Give me your love, and I shall yet be great!

La Vie est Vaine

VAIN is our Life :
 Of love a ray,
A little Strife,
 And then—Good Day!

Brief is Life's Flight :
 Of Hope a gleam,
A little Dream,
 And then—Good Night!

Le Ciel est par-dessus le Toit

THE sky above the roof is near,
So blue, so calm;
A tree that is the roof a-near
Rocks her green palm.

The deep bell in the atmosphere
Fails and is faint;
A sweet bird in the balmy air
Ceases her plaint.

Dear God! the very day is here
Calm and tranquil;
A peaceful murmur rises here
From the far ville.

“ What have you done, you, who weep there
In tears and ruth—
What have you done, weeping there,
With your white youth,
With your white youth? ”

Last Thoughts

I.

THINK not the poet loves like common clay,
He woos his art, and to his muse is wed:
Vain all thy words and all that thou canst say—
He takes no other amour to his bed.

II.

God, for this world bright and gay,
I in Thy Mansion of Time,
Lovingly, reverently pay
Rent with the run of a rhyme.

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